

Child Fatality Review #08-15
Region 6
Grays Harbor County

This one-day-old Caucasian male died from respiratory distress syndrome due to acute drug toxicity.

Case Overview

On April 7, 2008, this deceased child was born at home, delivered by a midwife. Both the mother and the midwife claim the birth went fine and the baby cried when born. However, when the umbilical cord was cut the infant's condition immediately deteriorated. There was approximately a 35 minute delay before medics were called. The infant was transported to Grays Harbor Community Hospital via ambulance. It was determined the child needed care beyond the capability of the Grays Harbor Community Hospital. A Tacoma General transport team was called to the hospital in Grays Harbor to pick up the infant and transport him to Tacoma. The Tacoma General staff arrived at the hospital and took over treatment at approximately 11:30 p.m. They were unable to revive the infant.

Children's Administration (CA) was not notified of this child fatality until July 2007. The hospital, the midwife, and law enforcement did not make a referral to CA at the time of the child's death in April 2008.

Referral History

On April 23, 1999, a neighbor reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) intake that the deceased child's mother was a recreational marijuana user. There was no allegation her drug use affected the care of her children. The mother admitted using one time during the early stages of her pregnancy. The mother gave birth to a baby (an older sibling of the deceased child) and did not miss any prenatal visits with her mid-wife. This referral was screened as information only.

On November 29, 2006, a neighbor reported to CPS intake the deceased child's father sold drugs. It was also alleged the deceased child's mother used drugs and became incapacitated. The deceased child's mother has two other children who live with their father. This referral was screened as information only.

On May 31, 2007, school staff reported to CPS intake reported the deceased child's eight-year-old sister had a burn on her thigh. The school nurse observed a burn on the back of her upper thigh which was perfectly round in shape. The sister said the burn was caused by a cigarette. She reported someone left a burning cigarette on a truck tailgate and she backed into it. The nurse felt the burn was worse than you would probably get from this

brief contact. Her mother put burn medication on the wound. The school reported no other concerns. This referral was screened as information only.

On July 17, 2008, the Grays Harbor Health Department reported to CPS intake the death of this infant. The cause of death was listed as neonatal death with respiratory distress syndrome due to acute drug toxicity (methamphetamine, opiates, and meprobamate) as a result of the mother's drug use. The deceased child was brought to the Grays Harbor Community Hospital just after being born and died in the hospital emergency room. The coroner's report confirmed the information from the Health Department. This referral was investigated by Child Protective Services (CPS) and closed with a founded finding for Negligent Treatment.

The nine-year-old sister of the deceased child still resides in the home. The deceased child had two other siblings who live with their biological father. The CA social worker offered services to the family, but they refused. The social worker considered filing a dependency petition on the nine-year-old sister, but there was insufficient evidence to support this action. This case was staffed at CPT in September 2008, and the CPT recommended closure with risk. The nine-year-old sibling's school counselor was contacted and reported no concerns for her well-being.

Issues and Recommendations

Issue: The Department was not notified of this incident until three months after the child's death. This case has been reviewed by the Health Department and it was agreed that they will begin making notification to CPS on all child deaths in Grays Harbor County.

Recommendation: No recommendation as a plan has already been established.